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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 8011

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUBJ: LOWER HOUSE ELECTIONS: TAY NINH

REF: SAIGON 6714

1. REFTEL REPORTED BASIC BIOGRAPHIC DATA ON THE TWENTY-FIVE PERSONS WHO INITIALLY FILED FOR THE THREE LOWER HOUSE SEATS AT STAKE IN TAY NINH. EIGHTEEN CANDIDATES REMAIN IN THE RACE. ONE, LE NGOC KHAI, APPEARS A SURE WINNER; THREE OTHER CANDIDATES ARE STRONGEST CONTENDERS FOR OTHER TWO SEATS: DONG VAN DUNG, TRINH QUOCK THE, AND NGUYEN VAN PHUONG.

2. THOSE WHO WERE DISQUALIFIED OR WHO WITHDREW:
A. TRAN VAN TANG:

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B. PHAM DANH VONG;
C. TRAN DINH HAO;
D. NGUYEN VAN TRUONG;
E. PHAM THAI SANH AKA NGHIEM;
F. LAM NGOC DIEP;
G. LUONG TAN DAT.

3. DAT'S DISQUALIFICATION ON TECHNICALITY REPORTEDLY ENGINEERED BY PROVINCE CHIEF, LT COL HO DUC TRUNG. DAT IS RD CADRE CHIEF IN TAY NINH AND REPORTEDLY VERY POPULAR BOTH WITH CADRE AND IN HIS OWN RIGHT. TRUNG IS SAID TO FAVOR CANDIDATE NGUYEN VAN PHUONG (SEE BELOW) WHO IS CHAIRMAN OF TAY NINH'S REVOLUTIONARY DEVOLOPMENT COUNCIL. IT IS ALLEGED PROVINCE CHIEF WANTED TO INSURE RD CADRES' UNDIVIDED ALLEGIANCE IN FURTHERING PHUONG'S CANDIDACY AND THUS ACTED TO ELIMINATE DAT.

4. CAO DAI POLITICS DOMINATES TAY NINH AND AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED ALL LEADING CANDIDATES ARE CAO DAI. THERE ARE

NO "OFFICIAL" CAO DAI CANDIDATES, HOWEVER, AS CHURCH RETAINS IT CAUTIOUS POLICY OF NOT OPENLY SUPPORTING CANDIDATES FOR PUBLIC OFFICE. GIVEN HIGHLY FACTIONALIZED NATURE OF CAO DAI INTERNAL POLITICS, MOREOVER, UNCERTAIN THAT CHURCH HIERARCY COULD EXERT SUFFICIENT POLITICAL INFLUENCE OVER THE FAITHFUL, EVEN IN TAY NINH, TO DECIDE THE LOWER HOUSE ELECTION. THE CAO DAI ARE NOTEWORTHY FOR THE BEWILDERING NUMBER OF POLITICAL GROUPS--OPEN AND COVERT, PRO-GVN, NEUTRAL AND PRO-VIET CONG, BUTA ALL UNQUESTIONABLY LOYAL TO THE RELIGION -- EACH CLAIMING THAT I S
IS THE SOLE LEGITIMATE POLITICAL SPOKESMAN OF THE RELIGION. IT APPEARS CAO DAI HOLY SEE HIERARCHY DISCREETLY PREFERS NOT TO TEST ITS AUTHORITY IN A POLITICAL CONTEXT. IN GNERAL, RATHER THAN RISK A REBUFF, IT ALLOWS ITS POLICTICALLY AMBITIOUS FOLLOWERS TO CLAIM THAY THEY SPEAK IN THE CHURCH'S NAME AND THEN ATTEMPTS TO INFLUENCE THOSE WHO EMERGE SUCCESSFUL.

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5. FOR EXAMPLE, IT IS BELIEVED THAT DURING VISIT OF GENERAL THIEU TO TAY NINH AUGUST 30, WHEN HE WAS FORMALLY RECEIVED AT THE HOLY SEE, HE WAS GIVEN PRIVATE ASSURANCES BY CAO HOAI

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SANG, "CARDINAL LEGATE", OF FIRM CHURCH SUPPORT FOR JOINT GVN SLATE. FOUR DAYS LATER TAY NINH GAVE TRUONG DINH DZU A NINE-THOUSAND VOTE PLURALITY. IN THE WAKE OF DZU'S UNEXPECTED TRIUMPH WORRIED PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS HAVE HINTED AT DELIBERATE "BE-TRAYAL" BY THE CHURCH HIERARCHY. SEEN IN LIGHT OF CAO DAI FACTIONAL-ISM, AND TRADITIONAL FENCE-SITTING BY HIERARCHY IN MATTERS POLITICAL, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT WORD "BETRAYAL" IS PROBABLY INAPPROPRIATE.

6. CONSIDERED A VIRTUALLY CERTAIN WINNER IS LE NGOC KHAI, AN OFFICAL OF THE PHU KHUONG DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION. PHU KHUONG INCLUDES TAY NINH CITY AND NEARLY THREE-FIFTHS OF THE PROVINCE'S VOTERS. KHAI IS ALSO A FORMER CANTON CHIEF, IS WIDELY KNOWN, AND ENORMOUSLY POPULAR.

7. LEADING CONTENDERS FOR THE OTHER TWO SEATS:
A. DUONG VAN DUNG, POPULAR YOUNG HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER AND YOUTH LEADER. HAS REPUTATION AS DEVOTED AND SELF-SACRI-FICING, ALTHOUGH HE WAS NOT VERY SUCCESSFUL A REPRESENTATIVE OF TRAN VAN HUONG IN PRESIDENTIAL RACE. DUNG APPARENTLY WILL RECEIVE SOME ASSISTANCE FROM THE TAY NINH TAN DAI VIET PARTY.

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B. TRINH QUOC THE IS PRINCIPAL OF THE PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL IN TAY NINH. HIS CONNECTIONS WITH THE HOLY SEE ARE ESPECIALLY GOOD, HIS FATHER-IN-LAW IS A HIGH CAO DAI DIGNITARY. THE PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES ARE ALSO SAID TO FAVOR HIM. THROUGH HIS FRIEDSHIP WITH CVT PRESIDENT TRAN QUOC BUU, THE IS LIKELY TO RECEIVE SOME ASSISTANCE FROM THE PROVINCE'S 5,ØØØ LABOR UNION-ISTS.

C. NGUYEN VAN PHUGFG IS PROVINCE CHIEF LT COL HO DUC TRUNG'S

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PERSONAL FAVORITE. ALTHOUGH BORN IN NORTH VIET-NAM, PHUONG HAS LIVED MOST OF HIS LIFE IN TAY NINH AND WAS A COMRADE-IN-ARMS WITH TRUNG IN GENERAL TRINH MINH THE'S "THIRD FORCE" LIEN MINH ARMY, RISING TO THE RANK OF MAJOR. THIS MAY BE ENOUGH TO ASSURE PHUONG'S ELECTION IS A PROVINCE WHERE THE MEMORY OF TRINH MINH THE IS LITERALLY WORSHIPPED.

8. OTHERW WITH SOME CHANCE:
A. TAN VAN BE, MERCHANT IN GO DAU HA, NON-CAO DAI, SEWD TO ENJOY GOOD REPUTATION:
B. VO THANH TONG, HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER, ALLIED WITH FELLOW TEACHER DUONG VAN DUNG.
C. DINH VAN DAM, PROVINCIAL CIVIL SERVANT:

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D. HUYNH LUONG THIEN, PROVINCIAL COUNCIL MEMBER:
E. NUYNH VAN DIEU, PROVINCIAL CUNCIL MEMBER.

9. SEVEN PERSONS FROM OUTSIDE TAY NINH ARE RUNNING AND NONE ARE ACCORDED A CHANCE BY KNOWLEDGEABLE LOCAL OBSERVERS. CANDIDACY OF SAIGON JOURNALIST BUI HUSQJIAM CAUSED FLURRY OF INITIAL SPECULATION THAT HE MIGHT BE POSSIBLE WINNER BUT INTEREST IN HIS CANDIDACY APPARENTLY WANED QUICKLY. NGUYEN HOANG TRINH, REVOLUTIONARLY DAI VIET FROM CHOLON AND A PROFESSOR OF ENGINEERING. IS ACKNOWLEDGED TO BE "QUALIFIED". (MISS) NGUYEN THI SEN IS OFFICIAL CVT ENTRY, SHE IS NOT REGARDED AS SERIOUS CONTENDER, NOR IS MEDICAL ASSISTANT LUONG VAN CHUONG.
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